



# Indiana State Bar Association

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**News Release**  
**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Summit on Racial Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System**

INDIANAPOLIS (July 20, 2009) – The Indiana State Bar Association in collaboration with the Indiana Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services will sponsor the "Summit on Racial Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System: A Statewide Dialogue" featuring W. Haywood Burns Institute Founder and Executive Director James Bell on Thursday, Aug. 27, at 8 a.m. at the Indiana Government Conference Center.

"Racial imbalance in the juvenile justice system is a complex issue and requires that all major points of contact in the system get actively involved in the Summit's dialogue," said R. William Jonas Jr., President, Indiana State Bar Association. "There is nothing more important to me, and especially to Indiana's youth, than the work that law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors and others are doing to make sure the legal needs of all youth are addressed."

The Summit will include three panel sessions led by national speakers and Indiana public officials: "Role of Law Enforcement, Judge, Defender and Prosecutor in Reducing Disproportionality and Disparity"; "Collaborative Approaches to Addressing Disproportionate Minority Contact"; and "Policy Considerations and Economics of Reforming Disparate Practices in Juvenile Justice."

The State Bar will also sponsor the "Pre-Summit Law Enforcement Roundtable" on Wednesday, Aug. 26, at 1:30 p.m. in the 5th Floor Conference Center at the downtown Regions Bank Building. The pre-summit will include a dialogue with law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, probation officers and detention center directors.

"Reducing racial and ethnic disparities is consistent with Indiana's commitment to a fair system of justice. The innovative practices showcased at this Summit point to communities that are achieving better outcomes for youth of color, enhanced public safety and effective crime prevention as a result." said Hon. Lorenzo Arredondo, Lake Circuit Court. "The Summit's central focus is to create a dialogue among decision-makers in the juvenile justice system, and lay the groundwork for improving disparities collaboratively as a state."

The Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services was established by the Indiana General Assembly in 2007 to determine why there was a racial imbalance in the number of children of color who were served by the child welfare, juvenile justice, education and mental health systems. The Commission submitted a report of its findings and an action plan to the governor and the General Assembly last October. Click here to read the Commission's final report [www.inbar.org](http://www.inbar.org).

The State Bar held its first summit on juvenile justice issues in August of 2004, "Children, Mental Health & the Law Summit." As a result, Indiana's juvenile mental health screening, assessment and treatment pilot project was initiated in 2007. This pilot program provides a systematic screening process to help identify youths in the juvenile justice system whose actions are attributed to mental health or substance abuse disorders. Routine screening, assessment and treatment can help reduce correctional costs and improve recidivism rates. There are currently 10 detention centers participating in the pilot project.

The ISBA considers the support of a second juvenile justice summit as a continuation of its interest in bringing about needed changes to address the unmet legal needs of youth in the juvenile justice system. As a necessary and natural spin-off to prior efforts, this upcoming Summit will identify numerous areas where the legal community plays a critical role in impacting outcomes of youth of color within the four systems of juvenile justice, mental health, education and child welfare.

The importance of this summit is highlighted by the commitment of both its honorary and working chairs to the best interest of all children. Chief Justice of Indiana Randall T. Shepard and Indiana State Rep. Bill Crawford serve as the honorary chairs. Judge Tanya Walton Pratt, Marion Superior Court, serves along with Judge Arredondo, Lake Circuit Court, as the working chairs.

For additional information, please contact Paje Felts at 1.800.266.2581 or [pfelts@inbar.org](mailto:pfelts@inbar.org).

*Founded in 1896, the Indiana State Bar Association (ISBA) is the single largest legal organization in the state. With more than 12,000 members, the ISBA serves the legal profession and the public, and supports several award-winning community service programs, including Indiana Kids Election, Ask Me What's Great About America and Talk To A Lawyer Today. For more information about the State Bar, visit [www.inbar.org](http://www.inbar.org).*